

THE INIQUITY OF OUR HOLY THINGS

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A SERMON
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BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And you shall make a plate of pure gold, and engrave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And you shall put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the miter; upon the forefront of the miter it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord.”
Exodus 28:36-38.

DEAR friends, I must begin by reminding you that we are not in this place dealing with unconverted men in their sins but with God's people Israel in their holy things. I say this because we must never forget that “without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.” And when we are dealing with certain types it must be understood that the blood has done its essential work. Even a high priest, with all his “glory and beauty,” could not put away sin as before God without reference to the shedding of blood. The atonement is supposed to have been offered—these people have been purified and brought near by the appointed offerings.

But now, here comes the point with which this type concerns itself. They are God's people and therefore they come to Him with their gifts and thank-offerings—these alone can draw near to Him or will even care to do so. But how shall they draw near, for even after being reconciled by the blood they continue to sin? There is iniquity even in their holy things! How shall they come to God without someone to stand between them who shall continually bear for them the iniquity of the “holy things which they shall hallow in all their holy gifts”? There is need of one who is “able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.” That sacred person is provided by God in Christ Jesus our Lord and thus the way to present acceptable sacrifice has been made clear for all the blood-washed people of God! Aaron in his glorious attire was the *type* of the living Christ who presented unto God the sacrifices of His people. Their faults in worship and fellowship he is made to bear and so their gifts and prayers are accepted before a holy God. Remember of what we are now speaking—not about the way of bringing the guilty sinner, at first, near to God, for that is by the *blood* alone—but the way of rendering the pardoned one *continually* acceptable to God in his daily service of thanksgiving, prayer, praise, labor and consecrated substance which he gladly brings to the Most High.

Aaron, for this purpose, was set apart beyond all other priests. They wore their plain white raiment of hallowed service, but he wore garments “for glory and for beauty.” As I said in the reading of the chapter, how glorious, how beautiful is the Lord Jesus in the eyes of God! Let me now add how beautiful is He in *our* eyes! The unveiled sight of Him will be our heaven! Our present view of Him is our salvation, comfort, strength and sanctification. Oh, the glory of Christ! Often have I cried to God in prayer, “I beseech You, look not on me, my God, but look upon the face of Your Anointed! Did You ever see the like of Him? Is He not altogether lovely to You? Even the poor, half-opened eyes of Your servants have seen enough beauty in the Lord Jesus to ravish their hearts and hold every affection in glad captivity. Look You, O God, upon Him, for in Him you are always well-pleased—

*‘Him and then the sinner see:
Look through Jesus' wounds on me.’”*

Why was the high priest so adorned for glory and beauty? We need such a high priest, but stop! Paul does not so put it. He says, “Such an high priest *became us*” (Heb 7:26). It was becoming for us to have this glorious high priest thus splendidly arrayed! When I thought over that saying of the apostle, it seemed to me that if the high priest had been covered with *ashes*—if He had been dressed in *rags*—He might have seemed such a high priest as would befit us! But God thinks not so—He has said, “Take

away the filthy garments from Him. Let them set a fair miter upon His head.” He has covered us with a robe of righteousness and we are comely with His comeliness which He has put upon us. And we are such in God’s sight that it is becoming that we should not be represented by a high priest in sordid garments, but by one who is dressed in “gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen.” What great things God thinks of His elect! What a high price He puts upon His redeemed! His delight is in His saints. He takes more solace in them that fear Him than in all creation besides. “Unto you that believe Christ is precious”—but you that believe are also precious to Him! Does He not say, “Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable”? Therefore none but an honorable and glorious person shall represent the chosen. Let us humbly rejoice in the glory and beauty of Him who takes our place before the infinite Jehovah—

*“Jesus, in You our eyes behold
A thousand glories more
Than the rich gems, and polished gold,
The sons of Aaron wore.”*

I thank God that though the meanest and vilest of all His creatures because of my sin, yet He who represents me to God is neither mean in person nor vile in apparel but He is altogether perfect in Himself and altogether beautiful in His array. Take comfort from this thought to begin with. You will need such consolation for I am going to remind you of very uncomfortable truths.

Let us consider first *a sad subject*—“The iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts.” And then, secondly, we shall dwell upon *a glad subject*—“HOLINESS TO THE LORD shall be upon Aaron’s forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things. It shall always be upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord.” May God, the Holy Spirit, open up the type before us and also open our hearts to receive its teaching!

I. First, consider A SAD SUBJECT—“The iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel shall hallow.”

They were “holy things.” Despite the iniquity, their offerings were hallowed and holy! This is a precious *saving* clause. Our prayers, our praises, our service to God—these are holy things—albeit iniquity attaches to them. They are holy as to God’s ordinance, for He has ordained them for His glory. He has bid us serve Him. He has bid us draw near in prayer. He has also said—“Whoever offers praise glorifies Me.” When we do what God bids us, the act is holy because it is done in obedience to the divine ordinance.

Such deeds are holy as to the divine design, for the sacrifices which the Israelites brought were meant to set forth Christ and His glorious work—therefore they were holy. They were meant to be tokens of our gratitude, love, dedication, homage—therefore they are holy. The great Father teaches us much precious truth by every institution of the tabernacle, the temple and the gospel church—and therefore obedience to each ordinance is holy.

These deeds were often holy in the intent of the worshipper. When he brought his turtle doves, or his lamb, or his bullock he intended, if he was not altogether outside of spiritual worship, to exercise real reverence, true allegiance and sincere gratitude to God—and this *intent* was holy. Our God is so gracious as to call His people’s love, His people’s faith, His people’s labor, His people’s patience “holy things” because He sees how truly their hearts desire that they should be! He knows what is holy and what is not holy—and though there is defilement about our holy things, yet holy things they are if sincerely presented, for the Lord God calls them so! Blessed be His name!

But although “holy things,” *there was iniquity upon all of them* and I shall not confine myself to the case of the Israelites, but shall speak of our own case. Did we ever do anything yet that had not some spot of iniquity upon it? Is not our repentance, after all, but poor stuff compared with what it ought to be? Is not unbelief mixed with our faith? Has not our love a measure of lukewarmness in it? Did you ever sing unto the Lord with pure, reverent praise—and without there being some forgetfulness of the God to whom you sang? I have never prayed a prayer, yet, with which I have felt content. From my first prayer till now I have need of grace to cover my shortcomings at the mercy seat. No act of consecration, no act of self-sacrifice, no rapture of fellowship, no height of spirituality has been without its imperfection! If even the apostles on the mount of transfiguration feared as they entered into the cloud and wandered in their speech, not knowing what they said, it is no strange thing that we are like they! If

we ourselves see much to regret, what must the eye of God behold? Sadly do I say, in the language of the hymn—

*“If I sing, or hear, or pray,
Sin is mixed with all I do.”*

Furthermore, *some of these sins are apparent*—indeed, many of them are painfully before our own eyes. Brothers and sisters, I need not enlarge upon our omissions—how we omit to pray. How we forget to study the Word with intelligent care. How we are remiss in keeping up daily fellowship with God. How slow we are in serving. How impatient in suffering. How backward in alms-giving. How apt to compromise with the world! If the Lord should mark iniquity, who among us could stand? When you think of what you have *not* done, who among you can talk about perfection? It is not so much sins of commission that trouble some of us—for by God’s grace we are, for the most part, kept from such transgressions—but sins of *omission* bear terrible witness against us. Who can number them? Who can escape their accusing voice? You have done well—you ought to have done much better. You have done much—you might have done far more. You have given freely, but have you ever given all that you have like the poor woman with her two mites, which were all her living? O brothers and sisters, if we have any idea of what the height of the standard of holiness is we shall be far more inclined to lament our failures before God than to vaunt our holiness before men!

But I will dwell upon the iniquity of those holy things which we *do* attend to. The phrase used in my text troubles me—I felt laid in the dust before God as I thought of it—“The iniquity of the holy things” is a terrible phrase to me. If the Lord sees iniquity in our *holy* things, what iniquities there must be in our *unholy* things! If even that which God calls holy still has iniquity about it—how vile must that be which even divine condescension could *not* call holy—which even our own conscience could not thus describe! Let us look into this sad matter. Do you never feel great dullness and deadness in holy things? One of my brothers behind me said to me one Sabbath morning, “We come here from business dull and dead, but you seem always to be full of holy life.” I dropped a tear when I got away from him, to think that he should have an opinion of me which I could not pretend to deserve. Alas, beloved, we know what it is to kneel down and feel as if we could not pray though we had then most need to wrestle at the throne of God! We know what it is to read our Bible, but we might as well have read a newspaper for all the desire of our heart to the truth of God. Have you ever felt almost unwilling to worship God? I am sure some of you do when you so readily stay away from public worship because of a little rain, or a slight headache, or some other excuse of the kind. Your willing absence is an outward and visible sign of the lack of inward and spiritual grace. When we do come to the house of God, do we always find our heart in the Lord’s ways? At the hour of prayer are we eager and earnest? Do not our spirits need whipping to devotion? Toward the business of the world we can fly like eagles—but in coming to God we creep like snails—

*“Our souls, how heavily they go
To reach eternal joys!”*

This is one of the common sins of our holy things—lack of life, lack of energy, lack of joy in the Lord.

When you get over this, have you not full often to confess a lack of reverence? We pray, my brethren, and we address God as “Holy! Holy! Holy!” but do we veil our faces with awe in His sacred presence? If we had a true sense of His holiness and glory, would not our sense of imperfection humble us in the dust? Alas, we draw near to God with our lips, but in our spirit we are flippant, impertinent and comparatively careless! Are we ever as fully conscious of the divine Majesty as we ought to be? We sing His praises and think rather of the music than of the worship. We use the language of prayer without an adequate sense of what we are saying. Is it not so? The Lord God is in heaven and we are upon earth—He is perfect and we are full of sin—how lowly should be our behavior! Is it so? We would prize the Savior far more as our Mediator if we had a deeper feeling of reverence for the thrice holy God to whom we approach by Him. Do you not too much fail in this respect in your holy things? When you come to the Lord’s table tonight, may you come with that holy thoughtfulness by which you may discern the Lord’s body—but you have not always done so—or if you have, you are far in advance of your pastor! It is true we pay no superstitious reverence to the material substances of bread and wine, but before Him whom they symbolize we bow in lowliest worship and with subdued spirits we eat of this

bread and drink of this cup. I fear in this holy thing we may not always have been so spiritual, so concentrated, so withdrawn from the world or so fired with holy affection as we ought to have been.

I have to complain—and I suppose you do, also—that wandering thoughts will intrude in my prayers, my study of the Word, my sacred song, my choice meditation—indeed, even in ministering the Word among you I find my mind roaming. I cannot wonder if you have wandering thoughts in hearing my poor words, for I cannot even hold my own mind to them as I would! Yet, as far as it is my Lord's Word which I proclaim, it is an unholy thing for us to be making room in our minds for other things while the truth of God is being spoken. Oh, that we could tie our thoughts to the cross and never allow them to go further than where they can constantly have Him in view! Sabbath worship, how holy and how precious it is when the soul is at home with her doors shut and none within but God! But when our minds are all over the place, climbing the hills of vanity, or diving into the abysses of care, then it is ill with us! If you bring your children on your back into your pew, or if you keep on jingling the keys of your cupboards, or if all your ledgers and your day-books seem spread out before you and all your fields and your spoiling hay are on your minds—surely such common care will spoil your holy exercises and prevent you from enjoying the repose of the day and the sanctity of the holy assembly!

Too often, I am afraid; the best of God's people play the hypocrite in a measure. Have we not in public prayer spoken beyond our experience? Have we not seemed very earnest, when, in truth we were working ourselves up to fervency rather than speaking because our hearts were on fire? It is an awful thing to be more glib than gracious! Our own brethren soon discern the imitation of fervency. I can, at the prayer meetings, readily tell when the brother is praying and when he is only *performing*, or playing at prayer! You know how it is with some prayers—they are like an invoice, “as per usual,” or a list of goods with “ditto, ditto” every here and there. Oh, for a living groan! One sigh from the soul has more power in it than half an hour's recitation of pretty pious words! Oh, for a sob from the soul or a tear from the heart—a dewdrop of heaven's own life! May the Lord help us to get rid of all seeming—this it is which, to a degree, defiles our sacrifices.

I have to complain also—and I fear many here would have to complain even more than I do—of lack of faith in prayer. We plead with God an exceedingly great and precious promise and we think we believe it when we do not more than half trust to it. If God wanted to surprise His people, all He would have to do would be to answer certain of their prayers—for these are offered as a matter of course with no idea of their being heard! I think I have seen this sort of thing in many good brethren in another form. They say, “Here is a wonderful thing! I prayed for such-and-such a thing and the Lord has given it to me.” Is that wonderful? You are on strange terms with God when it becomes a marvel to you that He keeps His promise! I like better the utterance of the good woman, who, when her friend said, “It is wonderful!” replied, “Yes, in one sense it is wonderful, but not as you mean it. It is not wonderful for God to fulfill His promises—it is just like Him.” It is just like the Lord to hear His people's prayers! O friends, our lack of faith has done more mischief to us than all the devils in hell and all the heretics on earth! Some cry out against the Pope and others against agnostics—but it is our own unbelief which is our worst enemy! If we could kill Old incredulity, we could soon rout all the rest of the devil's army. Oh for more faith that our unbelief might not mar our holy things!

Suppose we do not fail in any of these respects—do you know what often happens? Well, after the private prayer is done, or the public worship is over, or the preaching, or the visiting of the sick has been performed, we sit down and inwardly say, “Yes, I did that uncommonly well, I know I did. I was wonderfully helpful”—which, being interpreted, often means, “I am a fine fellow.” Then we rub our hands and say to ourselves, “And the wonder is I am not at all proud! Thank God I am never tempted in that direction. I have too much common sense. I know what a poor creature I am”—and so on and so on. Thus we do our utmost to coat over our good deeds with the slime of self-conceit. This is to pour filthiness upon our sacrifice and make it an abomination in the sight of the Lord!

Beside this, there generally mingles with the pride a contempt of others. Our endeavors to go up lead us to push others down. We have brought a bullock and we patronizingly say, “I like to see those poor people over yonder bring their pigeons and their doves. I am glad that they do something, though it is so much less than I.” This often means, “It makes my bullock look bigger when the turtle doves and pigeons are seen by way of contrast. No doubt those good people are doing their best—but yet, I think if they tried, they might have done better. At any rate, I have far exceeded them.” O foolish one! What

have you to do with your brother's sacrifice? What right have you to compare yourself with another? What have you that you have not received? And if you have received it, why do you boast as though you had not received it? But enough of this!

These are only a few of the iniquities of our holy things which we can see. Beside these, *there are many imperfections of our service which we do not notice* because we are not spiritual enough to discern them. But God sees them. Bring me a needle. This is a highly polished needle. What an instance of human skill to make so small an implement so bright, so absolutely smooth! Bring me that microscope! I have just now put the wing of a butterfly under it. That is God's work and, as I enlarge it, I discover no imperfection—but more and more of marvelous beauty! That butterfly's wing under the microscope becomes most wonderful and I worship God as I gaze upon His handiwork. Take the butterfly away, now, and put your needle in its place. What? Why this is a rough bar of iron which has never been smoothed or polished! This is wretched workmanship! It does not seem fit for delicate work. Such is man's manufacture—the best of it. When God puts your prayers and my sermons under His microscopic eye, they are not at all what we thought they were, but quite the reverse! This ought to humble us as we come before the presence of the All-Seeing One.

These imperfections in our holy things are so grievous that they should prevent any one of our works, or offerings, or prayers being accepted before the thrice-holy God. He is so pure that He cannot endure that which is defiled! He is so perfect that He cannot enter into fellowship with that which has a blemish! We must bring that which is *perfect* for it to be accepted in itself—and we have *nothing* of our own that is perfect. And therefore, were it not for the great high priest, of whom I am about to speak, we should be cut off from every kind of acceptance or communion with God. We have nothing which God can accept—

*“Our best is all defiled with sin:
Our all is worth nothing.”*

II. Secondly, we have now to consider a glad subject—Lord help me to speak of it aright! The glad subject is that a high priest was provided through whom the iniquity of Israel's holy things could be purged and the holy things themselves could be pleasant unto God. What was done in *type* has also been done in *reality*.

Consider, then, that *God provided the high priest*. It was ordained that he should be a man perfect in his person. Any defect that could be seen of eye, or hand, or foot disqualified him from being high priest—and secret faults which could not be observed by his fellow men equally disqualified him. In our Lord Jesus there is no defect, open or secret. The verdict of Pilate was true—“I find no fault in this Man.” He was tempted in all points but He never sinned in any point. The piercing eyes of the prince of this world found nothing in Him. He is perfect and so He can be high priest unto God.

The man had to be chosen of God. Aaron was so. God elected him to that high office and even so our Lord is God's elect in whom His soul delights. The Lord says, “I have exalted one chosen out of the people.” Christ is ordained of God and by divine authority He stands as high priest for us.

This man had to be anointed for his work. Aaron was anointed with oil, but our Lord was anointed with the Holy Spirit. We could not have a better high priest, nor could His anointing be more complete—He was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. If we had to choose and we had the wisdom of God granted us to make the choice, we could only say, “Let *Him* stand for us, for there is none like He.” blessed be God, we have precisely the high priest that we need!

This high priest was altogether given up to his people. Only a word here. He has a heart—his people's names are on the breast-plate which covers it. He has shoulders—his people's names are written on his shoulder-pieces and thus he lends them his power. He has feet—there were no sandals for the priest—he ministered barefooted before God. Why? Because it is the only way in which the Lord can be worshipped according to His repeated command—“Put off your shoes from off your feet, for the place whereon you stand is holy ground.” Christ has given to us the heart of His love, the shoulders of His strength, and the feet of His humiliation. “He loved me and gave Himself for me.” But, you observe that his head is left. Ah, well, he must give us his head. The power to think is supposed to dwell in the temples and the forehead. The golden plate covered Aaron's forehead from temple to temple and it was always conspicuous there. Thus Christ has given up His thought, His judgment, His mind, His every

faculty to His people. He is all ours! The high priest reserved nothing of himself—he gave all of himself to all his people. Christ is ours. From head to foot He serves us personally and constantly.

The point I want to bring out most prominently is this—the *high priest bore “the iniquity of the holy things.”* You and I have been guilty of iniquity in our holy things—we have said enough upon that humbling subject. But here is our joy—that Jesus bears it all! Putting on His heavenly miter, marked as “HOLINESS TO JEHOVAH,” He bears for us the iniquity. “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” “He was made sin for us, who knew no sin.” It is a wonderful mystery, the transference of sin and of merit—it staggers human reason—faith alone apprehends it! How can the guilty be accounted righteous? How can the perfectly righteous one be made sin? Mysterious these things are, but they are true and the Word of God is full of declarations to this effect. In this truth of God lies the one hope of sinners! All the iniquity of our holy things our Lord Jesus has borne and it is no longer imputed unto us!

As He stood before God, though He bore the iniquity of the people, yet *He exhibited to God no iniquity! And on His forehead was written, “HOLINESS TO JEHOVAH.”*

Notice that He bore before God holiness most precious—in token whereof, in type, the engraving was inscribed upon a plate of pure gold. The righteousness of Christ is more precious to God than all the mines of gold in the whole world! His righteousness was absolutely perfect—therefore there was nothing on that plate of gold but “HOLINESS TO JEHOVAH.” There was no iniquity in *His* holy things—His holiness was conspicuous and undeniable—it shone on the forefront of His miter. That holiness of His was permanent. It was not painted on that sheet of gold—it was engraved like the engraving of a signet. Christ’s righteousness will neither wash out nor wear out. Engraved in incorruptible gold, His righteousness shines gloriously and never loses its virtue. It retains its permanent perfection before the Lord. And as it was precious, perfect, permanent, so it was peculiar—for it was not merely holiness, but “HOLINESS TO JEHOVAH.” Christ was wholly dedicated to Jehovah! It was His meat and His drink to do the will of Him that sent Him. His one thought was to glorify the Father. And that holiness of His was prominent—although it was in His secret heart, it was also on His brow where even His enemies were forced to see it and honor it. In everything He thought, said, did, or suffered, He was evermore “*Holiness to Jehovah.*”

One thing more I want you to notice and that is that *the high priest always wore it*—“And it shall always be upon his forehead.” He is always “Holiness to God” on our behalf. Our Lord Jesus Christ never shifted His character, never ceased to be a servant of the Host High and never ceased to be perfectly obedient to Him whom He came to serve. Dwell upon these things. If that plate were once taken off, the high priest could no longer officiate—and if Christ were once to lay aside His righteousness on your behalf you would not be accepted. Your holiness is not always on your brow, but His holiness is always on the forefront of His miter and therefore you are always accepted in the beloved! How I delight to speak of this truth! There is a flood of infidelity in the church of God, today, and it often rushes against the doctrine of imputation—in fact, imputed righteousness has been kicked down the aisles of most of our places of worship—it cannot be endured! Yet we believe in it all the more for this! Listen to my text, “It shall always be upon *his* forehead, that *they* may be accepted before the Lord.” *We* are accepted because of something in *Him*. It is not what is upon *our* forehead, but what is upon His forehead that makes us and our offerings to be accepted! We are accepted in the beloved, justified by His righteousness.

I cannot preach about this matter as I would, but I beg you to think it over. The Lord Jesus by His holiness secures our personal acceptance and then the acceptance of our holy things. Our prayers are accepted, our tears are accepted, our zeal is accepted and our patience is accepted—to God there is now sweet music in our praises. In very deed God accepts our sermons, our Sunday school teaching, our tract distribution, our almsgivings to the poor, our contributions to His cause.

Our holy work is now viewed with divine favor. Will you not offer more and more of these holy things since they are, in very deed, accepted in Christ? Through His glorious righteousness we are favorably regarded of the Lord—there is no question about it. First God accepts *us* and then He accepts our *holy things*. The Lord is pleased with all we do for Him because He is pleased with His Son. When He sees our iniquity He turns His eyes away and looks on that perfect holiness which shines upon the forehead of the Well-Beloved! Our Lord is that altar which sanctifies both the giver and the gift. God grant us to know the comfort of this truth!

Now that I have taught you the main doctrine of the *type*, I desire to bring forth one or two lessons.

The first is, see here *a lesson of humility*. We always want to be growing in this divine grace. brothers and sisters, take each of us—we are by nature as proud as Lucifer—and if we do not happen to be flaming with pride just now, there is enough of tinder in the tinderbox of our heart to get up a blaze of pride within five minutes! We do not need the devil or our friends to flatter us—we can do that business better than any of them. We have a very fine opinion of ourselves. But what have we to flatter ourselves about? Nothing! Bring out here this morning all your holy things and enlarge upon their excellence. Bring out your diaries from the time of your conversion until now and read the record of your good deeds. There is iniquity in them all! I have heard of a good man who lay dying. He thought he would examine his life and sort out his actions—laying his good deeds on his right hand and his sins on his left hand. He went on with the sorting for a little time but very soon he perceived that they were so much alike—the good and the bad—that he felt sick of them all. He then determined to bind them all up in one bundle and throw them overboard—and trust to enter heaven by free grace alone! This was a very sensible decision! O friends, our good works, if we lay them up in store and value them as jewels, will, like the manna in the wilderness, very soon breed worms and stink! There is enough rottenness in our best performances to make them offensive to an enlightened conscience! Oh, that this fact—that even our holy things are tainted—may be the death warrant of our pride!

In the next place, *learn the awful hazard of going unto God without our high priest*. Our forehead will be leprous if we dare offer sacrifice without the high priest who wears the golden plate of holiness to the Lord upon His forehead. I am not going to expound the passage, but I will simply read to you 2 Chronicles 26:15-20. Uzziah was a commendable king and he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord—“His name spread far abroad; for he was marvelously helped, till he was strong. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the incense altar. “And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the Lord, that were valiant men: and they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertains not unto you, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests, the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for you have trespassed; neither shall it be for your honor from the Lord God. Then Uzziah was angry, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was angry with the priests, the leprosy even rose up on his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord, from beside the altar of incense. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from there; yes, himself hastened also to go out, because the Lord had smitten him.” Whenever you get to think that you can stand before God and present your own offering without the Lord Jesus, the leprosy of fatal pride is white upon your forehead! I tremble for some people when I hear them parading their own perfection. One said, “My will is so in accord with God that I do not need to pray.” The leprosy was on his forehead when he thus spoke! This has polluted many who seemed to be among the most excellent servants of God. They have tried to do without the great high priest and His representative holiness and, like Uzziah, they have been cut off from the house of the Lord and made to dwell alone and bemoan their folly.

But, dear friends, we may here find another lesson—*learn how you must be dressed as a royal priesthood unto the Lord*. I thought I would copy out what George Herbert says about the dress of the Lord’s Aarons. You will not understand it all as I read it, but if you have George Herbert’s poems, read the piece entitled, “Aaron,” and chew at it till you have masticated its meaning. He speaks of the clergy, but we will understand him as speaking of all believers who are as assuredly priests and clergy as any ordained ministers can be. We are made kings and priests unto our God. We want to know how we ought to be dressed. One cries, “Wear a surplice!” Another says, “No, keep to the black gown.” We are not thinking of such trivialities as *garments*, black or white. We belong to a *spiritual* kingdom, and our robes are *spiritual*. “Then,” says one, “it is clear that we must be holy.” Granted; but it is not *our* beauty and our glorious dress before the Lord. If you put on *your own* holiness, to be dressed in it, you will only display your iniquity. “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.”

The Lord Jesus Himself is our dress—we put on Christ! Let Herbert speak—

“Holiness on the head,

*Light and perfections on the breast,
 Harmonious bells below, raising the dead,
 To lead them unto life and rest.
 Thus are true Aarons dressed.
 Profaneness in my head,
 Defects and darkness in my breast,
 A noise of passions ringing me for dead
 Unto a place where is no rest.
 Poor priest, thus am I dressed.
 Only another head I have, another heart and breast,
 Another music, making live, not dead,
 Without whom I could have no rest:
 In Him I am well dressed.
 Christ is my only head,
 My alone only heart and breast
 My only music, striking me even dead;
 That to the old man I may rest
 And be in Him new dressed.
 So holy in my head
 Perfect and light in my dear breast,
 My doctrine tuned by Christ (who is not dead,
 But lives in me while I do rest)
 Come, people: Aaron's dressed."*

When you have Christ's head and breast, and doctrine, then you are ready for service and may say, "Come, people: Aaron's dressed." This is how I desire to preach to you, putting off self, and putting on Christ as all. C.H.S. [Charles Haddon Spurgeon]? Away with him! JESUS! Let *that* dear name be glorified forever! When you go to Sunday school do not go as pious Mary or thoughtful Thomas—you will make a mess of it if you do. But go as the messenger of the Lord, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all! Be clothed with the Lord Jesus! Hide yourself away in His glory and beauty—and then you will be a true Aaron—dressed for your holy work.

Lastly, *let sinners gain a store of comfort here*. If God's own people have iniquity in their holy things, and yet they have Christ to bear it for them, how patient must He be who is our high priest! You, poor sinner, you need a Savior very much. Lo! He is here, ready to be a go-between for you and put His righteousness in front of your iniquity, and Himself in the place of your poor guilty and condemned person! Come, now, and hide away in Christ! Come, now, and trust my Lord with all His beauteous garments. He wears them, still, and wears them for poor ragged sinners. Come and look up to Jesus, and He will stand for you, and you shall become the righteousness of God in Him, because He is made a curse for you! God bless you, beloved, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Exodus 28:1-38.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—912, 382, 325.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST!

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